



## Florida House of Representatives HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

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### FLORIDA LEGISLATORS ANNOUNCE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY DIPLOMA INITIATIVE

**TALLAHASSEE, FL** – Florida House Majority Leader Adam Hasner (R-Delray Beach), Senator Thad Altman (R-Melbourne) and Representative Erik Fresen (R-Miami) today announced Florida's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diploma Initiative. To provide for our state's future economic growth, the legislation raises high school graduation standards to ensure Florida's students are prepared to enter the increasingly competitive global economy.

"Although we are now in one of the state's most challenging legislative sessions in decades, it is critical we continue to focus on the future and improve our quality of education to secure Florida's long-term prosperity," said Florida House Majority Leader Hasner. "Raising standards for Florida students will ensure they are ready for the challenges of the high-paying careers of the future."

#### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diploma Initiative:

**Raising Math and Science Standards:** The legislation raises the standard diploma requirements to new 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diploma graduation requirements.

- Starting next fall, freshman in the Class of 2014 will be required to take and pass the following courses:
  - **MATH:** Take Algebra I and Geometry for two out of four required math courses.
  - **SCIENCE:** Take Biology I as one of three required courses.
- Continuing to raise the bar, freshman in the Class of 2016 will be required to take and pass the following courses:
  - **MATH:** Take Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II for three out of four required math courses.
  - **SCIENCE:** Take Biology I and Chemistry for two out of three required courses.

**Raising the Bar for Graduation:** The legislation requires students receive a grade-level score on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade FCAT to graduate. Currently, seniors in 12<sup>th</sup> grade can actually graduate high school with a below grade-level score on the FCAT, not even having to show proficiency on 10<sup>th</sup> grade standards.

(more)

**Enhancing Bright Futures:** The legislation aligns Bright Futures Scholarships with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diploma requirements. To make the Bright Futures program a little brighter, the legislation ensures scholarship recipients are prepared to succeed at Florida universities and colleges.

“Florida is a national leader in reforming education, and the progress of our students and schools is evidence our system of high academic standards and accountability is working,” said Senator Altman. “If we do not establish course standards commensurate with our students’ outstanding abilities, we are selling them short of reaching their full potential.”

“Florida students aren’t just competing with their peers in Georgia, California and New York. They are competing with students in China, India and other nations across the globe – nations that annually produce more mathematicians, scientists and engineers than the United States,” said Representative Fresen, “The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diploma Initiative is Florida’s next step to making our students and high schools more competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.”

Despite a recent overall ranking of tenth in the nation for quality of education by the highly respected annual report card issued by *Education Week*, Florida failed in the category of “college readiness,” scoring an F with an abysmal 50 out of 100 points. Currently, a student can meet the requirements for high school graduation and not meet the minimum college admissions requirements for *any* state university.

The national research on high school standards is clear. More challenging, college and career-aligned high school classes lead to future success for students. Students who take Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and one other higher-level course are more likely to succeed in college-level mathematics. In fact, raising standards benefits minority students the most, narrowing the achievement gap. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diploma Initiative will ensure all students graduating from Florida high schools are prepared for the rigors of college and their future careers.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diploma Initiative is Senate Bill 2654/House Bill 1293.

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